



Many Voices Working for the Community

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

NEWS RELEASE

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Department of Energy Officials Meet with Advisory Board Leaders in Knoxville

Several representatives from the Department of Energy (DOE) in Washington, D.C. came to Knoxville April 27-28 to meet with the chairmen of citizens advisory boards from around the DOE Complex.



In honor of National Volunteer Week, DOE Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management James Rispoli recognized the nine local boards that comprise the department's Environmental Management Site Specific Advisory Board. In a special ceremony held in conjunction with the semiannual Site Specific Advisory Board Chairs meeting in Knoxville, Rispoli presented the President's Volunteer Service Award pin to the board representatives. Here, Chairman Kerry Trammell receives the pin on behalf of the Oak Ridge board.

Heading the list of DOE dignitaries was James Rispoli, Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management who came to thank the boards for their dedication and to challenge them to continue their work to the charter mission and to represent the concerns of the communities.

The DOE Environmental Management Site Specific Advisory Board (SSAB) is the largest advisory board chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Its mission is to provide DOE with advice and recommendations on its environmental cleanup program at nuclear weapons and research facilities. The chartered board is composed of nine individual local

boards at DOE sites throughout the United States where cleanup work is underway. The local SSABs are composed of citizens concerned about the environmental cleanup and long-term stewardship at these DOE sites.

Twice a year the chairs or other representatives of boards in Oak Ridge, Colorado, Kentucky, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, South Carolina, and Washington state meet to discuss individual and common concerns and issues.

Other DOE visitors from headquarters included Charlie Anderson, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management; Mark Frei, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Business Operations; Douglas Tonkay of the Office of Commercial Disposition Options; and Melissa Nielson and Doug Frost of the Office of Internal/External Coordination. Gerald Boyd, DOE ORO Manager and Steve McCracken were present at the meeting to welcome the attendees along with Knoxville Mayor Bill Haslam and Dave Mosby representing the City of Oak Ridge.

Rispoli spoke on the vision and plans for the Environmental Management Program. He noted five main areas of focus. The first area is safety in conducting cleanup operations and demolition of facilities. "Whatever we do we must do safely," he said. "We ask people to do things that are inherently dangerous. If that work can't be done safely it affects the credibility of the program and the safety of the community."

Rispoli said the second area of focus was risk reduction. "The department is trying to put money where risk is and reduce the risk," he said. He said disposition of high level tank waste was currently the highest priority for the department.

Project management to achieve a high performance level was a third area of importance. "We have found that when accepted project management principles are not used, we usually don't succeed," said Rispoli. "The object is to ask the proper questions before we begin projects." It is during the decision making process, he said, that input from the advisory boards and other stakeholders is needed.

Rispoli said the fourth area of focus is human capital. There have been significant reductions in workforce in DOE's Environmental Management program, which he hopes to stabilize. He said eliminating some uncertainty about job security would also aid in achieving the goal of a high performing organization.

Lessons learned from completed projects was the fifth area he discussed. He said it was important to get feedback and a diversity of viewpoints to challenge thinking about how to improve processes.

Frei gave an overview of the fiscal year 2007 Environmental Management budget. He said the FY 2007 budget request to Congress is \$5.828 billion, down about \$700 million from FY 2006. He said the reduction is due, in part, to completion of projects, such as at Rocky Flats, Colo., and Fernald, Ohio. He also said there had been other requirements on the federal budget such as hurricane relief and the conflict in Iraq.

Oak Ridge's cleanup budget is due to drop about \$14 million from \$485 million in 2006 to \$471 million in 2007.

Anderson talked about nuclear materials disposition and consolidation. He said near-term issues are consolidation of excess plutonium-239 by 2008; disposition of uranium 233 from Oak Ridge National Laboratory; removal of surplus material from the Y-12 National Security Complex; removal of surplus material from Los Alamos National Laboratory; removal of all category 1 and 2 materials from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; removal of materials from Sandia National Laboratory by 2008; removal of surplus weapons pits from at the Pantex plant in Texas; and consolidation of plutonium 238.

He said the disposition of uranium-233 in Oak Ridge and the consolidation of plutonium-239 at Hanford, Wash., will save DOE significant amounts of money in security costs.

Tonkay discussed DOE's waste disposition activities. He said 45 percent of DOE's Environmental Management FY 2007 budget request is for disposition projects, while another 33 percent supports remediation and decontamination projects that generate waste.

Tonkay said the Office of Commercial Disposition Options is developing national disposition system strategies for major waste streams. He said a disposition strategy report is being finalized at DOE headquarters and should be available for public review within a few weeks. The report will describe plans to integrate and optimize low-level and mixed low-level waste efforts.

During the meeting, the SSAB representatives crafted two recommendations to DOE. The first asks for inclusion of the SSABs in the development of future budget requests at local sites. The second recommends that DOE use lessons learned from closure activities at Rocky Flats and Fernald in subsequent closure operations.

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